

BABY BOOKWORMS

The Little Habitués of the Children's Library.

Well Nelson Tells About One of the Prettiest Little Institutions That New York Has.

Baby bookworms! The little habitués of the Children's Library are not known by that name, but it suits them exactly. Such a lot of intellectual dirty faces it is impossible to find outside of 500 Seventh avenue. They come in rain and sunshine, in Summer and storm, every afternoon between 3 and 5 o'clock and all Saturday and stay at the reading tables, arms akimbo, bending over books and laughing, crying and loving "Red Riding Hood," "Lion Jack," "Hop o' My Thumb," "Cinderella" and the rest of the heroes and heroines of Wonderland.

They come in gingham aprons, patched trousers, brimless hats and treacherous shoes from the humble homes in the immediate neighborhood for a book or another peep at the red hat, league boots or magic wand of the chrome chef d'œuvre. They come before the library is opened and remain until ejected by pretty Miss Edwards. They come with dolls in their arms, sometimes with moon-faced babies in their laps, and more than one yellow dog has slept between a pair of warm little legs while the master followed a fourteen-year-old hero up the Congo where a diamond mine and a beautiful bicycle awaited him.

The library has had but one birthday, yet in that time an average of 1,000 children have patronized it every month, the difference in the sexes being about one-tenth of 1 per cent. in favor of the boys.

The best time for a study of these literary midgets is Saturday before the circus and baseball season. Then the tots come in groups, arrange themselves about the little oaken tables, all the small boys in the large chairs and the big girls squeezed into the kindergarten seats, the reason for which choice Miss Edwards is unable to account. The coveted book is reserved for home and the time given to pictorial series, in which the library abounds. By way of preparing these poor tots for the wisest use of the larger free libraries and reading-rooms no talking is allowed. Books may be changed, the owner pass from one table to another, and he may call for as many books as he likes, but silence is required and hints are given in the matter of position and the proper handling of periodicals and books. A child who has been a reader one week does not wet his finger to turn a leaf nor does he dog-eat a page.

By having the following blank filled any child may borrow books:

The undersigned, an inhabitant of the city of New York, between 5 and 12 years of age, residing at..... hereby applying for the right to use the Children's Library, 500 Seventh avenue, promises to obey all its Rules and to give immediate notice at the Library of any change of residence.
(Sign Name).....
No. of School.....
Name of Teacher.....
I believe it will be safe to loan this applicant books.

Satisfied as to the residence of the little would-be book-borrower, the next requisite is a pair of clean hands, and some clever schemes are resorted to by the small boy, who to escape a hand bath will wear mittens, pin a brown paper over his hands, or buckle them behind and attempt to carry off the book in his mouth.

Clever as these dodges are, Miss Edwards insists on seeing the little palms and then begins a hunt for cold water. On rainy days the puddles in the sidewalk are resorted to; if an ice wagon happens to be in the neighborhood a cold rub against the crystallized block intended for the butcher, and if the book is particularly interesting and there is danger in delay a brave pull is made at some basement door and permission asked of the astonished maid to "wash my hands a little."

As a rule, however, the pretty, if grimy little hands are taken home at a speed to break all previous runs. Sometimes the return trip is made immediately after abutment and more often deferred.

I sat with a group of boys the other afternoon and tried to harmonize the relations of one small, boy-fellow of seven named Louis, with the fair but obdurate librarian. He was looking through a *Chatterbox* and had *St. Nicholas* in his lap, neither of which he cared for. He wanted a book but "Miss Edwards wouldn't let him have none."

"Why?"
"Well, 'cause the last one got tore. I didn't tear it. It was my baby."

I opened my eyes and pursued his baby with interest.

"It's Emma. She is two, but—"

"Pretty?"

"Yes, but she finds my book every place I hide it. I'm as soon as I go in the house she comes at me and bites me with all the teeth she's got till I give it to her. Then she laughs and tears it. I can't help her. It ain't my fault, and the little forehead wrinkled and the small face looked unspeakable misery."

"No," said Miss Edwards when I tried to intercede for Louis. "Other boys have babies, and that excuse has been given too often. It is his fourth offense. He may come to the library and read, but I can't let him take a book home until I can trust him."

Louis's eyes were becoming very misty when a small neighbor with cherry cheeks and black hair began to tell me about his baby and her respect for library books.

Still I was sorry for poor Louis. He wanted to read "Lion Jack" since before Christmas and it was always out. If I could have a card it might come in. We're going to move in a nice new house, and then I can hide everything from Emma. The child wore a little hole in the knee of his trousers into a gap that admitted his hand during the talk.

The good done these little people is incalculable. Aside from the delights of fairy and army stories, travels, adventure and romance, they are kept from the evil influences of the street and are taught

practical lessons in honesty, integrity, industry, forbearance and culture. The youngest has a keen regard for the rights, privileges and comforts of his neighbor and the young lady in charge has time for many oral lessons, many love pats and gentle words, that will be as enduring as the memory of the child receiving them.

The library was incorporated two years ago, and for a time had quarters in the George Bruce Memorial by courtesy of the New York Free Circulating Library. The attendance was good from the start, but the toddlers made so much noise admiring the picture books and breathing deep sighs over affecting portions of the story books that the Association asked the privilege of suffering the little ones not to come unto them. The result was the lease of a front room in the building 500 Seventh avenue, where the literary embryo quietly cry all over Miss D. Dimple and Capt. Jack. The quarters are ridiculously small, but it is a heaven to hundreds of small people. The books, numbering about 1,200, were supplied by gifts from New York publishers and friends of the undertaking. To place the library on a purely unsectarian basis the books were inspected by a supervising committee of accredited representatives of the Protestant, Catholic and Hebrew faiths.

There are a thousand books in reserve that need to be bound, a growing demand not only for more but newer books. The old-fashioned volumes are not to the liking of the same critics, who want velocipedes, tennis, talking dolls, steam yachts, Henry Stanley's and similar modern things. All gifts are acceptable, old books and magazines being exchanged at the second-hand stores for reading matter suitable to the juniors.

Small as the undertaking, it is a matter of regret that there are not a hundred children's libraries about the city.

NELL NELSON.

FADS IN FORTUNE-TELLING.

Swell Murray Hill Girls Who Patronize a Dark-Eyed Seeress.

"Fortune-Teller to the Four Hundred!" It wouldn't be a bad sign, and really there is a woman who might almost lay claim to the distinction, for in the revolution of fads and fashions in their orbits that which is oldest comes round again, says a New York letter in the *Pittsburgh Leader*.

Of course not a girl of them would own to being superstitious, but to put on one's "swagger" Spring suit and pay a swagger price for a visit to a dark-eyed woman with a red turban marked with Egyptian characters about her head bears a mild flavor of interest to an afternoon.

The woman is clever for she really keeps an owl. It's a great mistake for sorcerers to grudge little additions like that to her paraphernalia. She wears broad, heavy bracelets on her wrists and wraps something red about her shoulders. Otherwise her environment is prosaic, and she being for the moment in luck, quite unobtrusively and unobtrusively comfortable.

She has taught all fashionable New York that to dream you see a poet is a sign you will lose money. It is supposed that this will widen the gap between Bohemia and McAllisterville.

A girl who was going abroad for the London season dreamed a duke was in love with her and was very much cast down on learning that she would be out to marry a needy and shiftless fellow.

We all dread nowadays to dream of stockings, unless they are cotton ones, or of broken parcels. The dream we long for is of pots of jelly, for long life and good fortune, or of picking violets, for happiness in love.

At a May party in a country house on Long Island last week a colored auntie was called in to tell fortunes by tea-grounds. She was very black and she had a most lively and mischievous pickaninny whom she called Alphonsa.

When the prettiest girl in the party had handed her cup the seeress asked the grounds well about in it and then reversed it for a few minutes into the saucer.

The pretty girl didn't scold when Alphonsa grinned in her face "As an imp from the lower regions, and Alphonsa's mamma showed proper gratitude by announcing a clover leaf and a ring."

I am afraid I scowled on the little racial for in my cup she discovered a snake, thereby sending me, of course, for my own peace of mind, into the ranks of them that scoff and disbelieve.

ROMANCE OF A DIAMOND.

Heart Secrets Revealed Through the Cape Colony Police Regulations.

A very curious case has been exercising the authorities at the Cape of Good Hope, says a correspondent of a London paper.

In accordance with the law which regards stolen every diamond which a man sells or has in his possession unless its origin and pedigree are registered at the detective department, a man brought up for registration the other day a large diamond, worth some thousands of pounds, which had, he alleged, been given to him long ago by his sweetheart.

His story was that a certain lady, still living and now the wife of another man, had found the stone and sent it to him some fifteen or twenty years ago, enclosed along with a feather in a letter begging him to accept it as a keepsake.

The faithful lover had kept it all this time, he said, but now, being hard up, wished to sell it. He demanded, accordingly, that the detective department should supply him with a permit.

The department communicated with the lady. She, however, being a married woman, seemed in no way anxious to have a foolish romance of her callow youth revived, and professed to have no memory of any such transaction.

Thereupon the mother of the claimant rummaged about and discovered the original autograph letter, feather and all. There it lies at the detective office—a faded relic of a sentiment of long ago. It is a composition pervaded by as little wisdom as is usual in such things; but accident has attached to it a value more substantial than any, perhaps, which the recipient put upon it "when we two parted in silence and tears."

The latest news is that the authorities believe the story, that the genuineness of the whole affair is in a fair way to be established, and that the happy owner will soon be enriched by the proceeds of the diamond which has had so strange a history.

One Exception.

(From the Chicago Tribune.)

"George," said the wife, with some anxiety, "I don't like the scowling way you have got into lately. You make light of everything."

"Not everything," responded George.

"There is one thing nobody can make light of."

"What is it?"

"The car lamp!" groaned the suburbanite husband.

Self-Convicted.

(From the Chicago Tribune.)

Brown—What's the weight of that hog hanging there?

Butcher's Man—Same as me, sir—230 pounds.

Brown—Why don't you go into business on your own hook?

FISHES FILLED WITH VOLTS. AT THE SPIGOTS OF WIT.

Queer Experience with the Ray, or Marine Torpedo.

Electrical Discharges Fatal to Other Fish, but Not to Man.

Some years ago a young man, in all the glory of his first knickerbockers, found himself in a small village on the New England coast, and, liking the location, determined to spend the season there, says the *Electrical Review*.

The morning following his arrival he ran down to the beach, where he found a crowd of red-shirted men gathered around a flat fish about three feet in length.

"We're trying to get some one to heft it," said an old sea-dog in answer to a question.

"Lift it! Why, a child could do that," remarked the young man from the city.

"Praps he could," replied the fisherman; "but if you kin lug the fish from here to the dory over yonder you kin earn \$5."

"You're a fine lot of men," said the city youth, with a laugh; "can't lift a fish of that size? Why, I'll wager the same amount that I can throw it that far."

The fishermen were very anxious to take the wager, and finally the young man approached, thrust his fingers into the eyes of the fish, and, if it had been any other fish we might have said, prepared to throw, but as it was the moment his hands touched the fish a strange look of surprise came over his face, and those near might have seen a certain rigidity of the muscles. He retained the same position for several moments, then, with many grimaces, asked to be relieved, and amid roars of laughter the fish was pulled from his hands. When the young man had recovered his equanimity he confessed that it was the heaviest fish he had ever attempted to lift.

The fish was the ray, known popularly as the torpedo (*torpedo marmoratus*), and one of the most powerful of the marine electricians.

In examining the torpedo the electrical apparatus is very noticeable, being made up of two large, flat bodies lying on each side of the head.

The organs are composed of numerous prisms placed vertically, each of which is subdivided by delicate cells, forming small cells, which contain a clear, tremulous, jelly-like substance. In a specimen of torpedo *marmoratus* one may count nearly five hundred of these prisms.

It has been found that the upper side of the fish is negative and the lower positive, and that the power is entirely under the control of the fish.

Some curious experiments have been made; thus, the Scientist Marex applied a telephone to the fish, and at every ordinary shock given he distinctly heard a click. When the fish was greatly excited a loud groan was heard, which sounded like "mi," and the discharge was prolonged four or five seconds.

The electrical discharge of this fish is not of sufficient power to kill a man unless he is in an extremely enfeebled condition, but that it is fatal to other fishes has been noticed on many occasions.

STORY WITH A MORAL.

Sure Reward of Persistent Honesty and Frugality.

Not many years ago a young man named Stickney, who came from Presque Isle, studied law with Josiah Crosby in Dexter, says the *Lewiston Journal*. Then he went West, and later he became president of a system of roads running from St. Paul.

Later two sons of Mr. Crosby worked in a mill there and studied law in addition. They saved their earnings, and having learned well their legal lessons, they too, went out to St. Paul, opened an office in which they slept, saving their cash here as well.

Mr. Stickney gave them some business, and at the same time he kept an eye upon them. But they were of sterling New England stock; they kept in the straight and narrow path, and finally between them could muster some \$4,000. One day President Stickney walked into their office and said:

"Boys, you have been prudent and industrious, and I am inclined to aid you. Go over to St. Anthony and put out your money for land down near the railroad station."

The boys did so, and a few days later President Stickney established close to this land a big machine shop plant for his roads. Later the boys sold out, and when they came to figure up each was worth about \$70,000.

OSCAR WILDE'S SARCASTIC.

An Expert at Snubbing and Getting Out of Consequent Scrapes.

At a gathering in London not long ago Oscar Wilde was approached by a small man, who slapped him familiarly on the back, exclaiming:

"Hello, Oscar, do you know every time I see you you get fatter and fatter?"

"I don't know who you are," replied the apostle of aestheticism, looking down from his advantage of several inches.

"But every time I see you you get ruder and ruder."

Needless to say the too friendly acquaintance vanished abashed into the crowd.

"Can you tell me," asked Oscar, turning to a lady with whom he had just been talking, "who that dreadful little cad is?"

"That, Mr. Wilde," returned the lady, with a frigid glance and haughty manner, "is my husband."

"Is it, indeed?" replied he, with an agreeable smile and holding his ground. "Then what a pity you don't teach him better manners!"

HE GOT READY QUICK.

A Buffalo Young Man Beats the Record Preparing for a Trip to Europe.

A young man well known in the city lately departed for Europe with the shortest notice on record, says the *Buffalo Express*. A few hours before the train left Buffalo that made connection with the steamer at New York he determined to join some friends on their European tour.

He went home, told his family of his intention, and, of course, was met by the surprised queries:

"How can you get ready? You have got to prepare for an ocean voyage. What are you going to do?"

"Nothing, but black my boots," was the laconic reply.

Who will assert that woman is superior to man after such an incident?

Didn't Strike the Combination.

(From the Chicago Tribune.)

Hokus—So Count Batowsky has at last married Miss Twiney, the daughter of the agricultural implement man?

Fokus—Guess he will rake in a big jack-pot, eh?

Hokus—Not if I know Twiney. The marriage is likely to prove more of a snider than a resper.

Some of the Best Jokes That Trickle Through.

One Reason.

(From Punch.)



Mrs. Tulliver (to the pride of her heart)—Reginald, my boy, why are you so idle? Reginald (wearily)—Because, my dear mother, there's really no time to do any thing.

Couldn't Fool Him.

(From the Chicago Tribune.)
Salesman at Music Store (to customer from Uphreeseek)—You'll give me a couple of dollars, you say, for that "old, second-hand instrument?" My stars, man, that's a Stradivarius!

Customer—A what?
A Stradivarius, sir; a genuine Stradivarius!

"Strad nothing! It's a fiddle! Reginald! I don't know a fiddle when I see it! I'll give you just \$2.50 for the darned old thing."

But Time Files.

(From the Chicago Tribune.)
"Oh, every dog has its day."

"Probably that is the season why so much of our time goes to the dogs."

The Boli Theory.

(From the New York Weekly.)
Orator—Yes, gentlemen and fellow-citizens, the wealth of the country is in its soil? Old Hayseed in back seat—Guess ye never tried farmin', did ye?

It Broke His Heart.

(From Judge.)
"I declare, Tom," said the fond mother, "the baby is the very image of you!" And the papers next day chronicled a "mysterious disappearance."

Still, She's Not Happy.

(From the Chicago Tribune.)
Mrs. Cheery—That's a lovely cape. Is it the latest thing out, dear?

Mrs. Teerly (with a sob and a sigh)—Oh, no; the latest thing out this season is my husband. He never gets in before 3 o'clock.

High Water.

(From the Chicago Tribune.)
Uncle Tumbleton—Then you think Florida is a great State? But tell me, Tom, how is the water?

Tom Tumbleton—The fact is, uncle, I did not touch any.

Uncle Tumbleton (suspiciously)—So bad as that?

Tom Tumbleton—Too expensive, uncle. Don't you know that Florida water is 50 cents a bottle?

Force of Habit.

(From the Chicago Tribune.)
"Thomas, what is your ophthalmist?" asked Speaker Reed's wife.

"I don't know," replied the Speaker; "but the eyes have it."

He Needed Cement.

(From the Boston Courier.)
Peddler—Can I sell you some patent cement, sir?

Mr. Needle—Cement? What do I want with cement?

Peddler—Well, you look as if you was broke.

Her Daughter's Literature.

(From Judge.)
Mrs. Jaysmith—What are you reading, Lem?

Miss Jaysmith—Pop's poems, ma.

Mrs. Jaysmith—Are they the poems of the present Pope or the last?

Make the Best of Everything.

(From Judge.)
"O, dear, such weather!" exclaimed Gazam as he gazed at the perennial rain.

"You ought to be thankful that we have any weather at all," replied Mrs. Gazam, who had laid her hat to look at the bright side of everything.

Bomb Proof.

(From Judge.)
Czar of Russia (just out of bed)—What has become of my undershirt?

Valet—Please, Your Majesty, the blacksmith's putting fresh rivets in it.

One Customer.

(From the Boston Courier.)
Wife—What is this mending and repairing company that is advertised in the paper, John?

Husband—It is a company that has been formed to meet a long-felt want. Garments in need of repair and buttons and things are taken in and fixed for a small sum.

Wife—A good thing for bachelors, I should say.

Husband—And for married men, too, my dear; for married men, too, my dear, after attaching his pantaloons to his overcoat with a safety-pin, he went out on the stoop to see what kind of a night it was.

Quite a Trip.

(From the Chicago Tribune.)
First N. Dakotan (near the Manitoba line)—I guess I'll take in the South till spring sets in for good.

Second N. Dakotan—How fur South do you reckon you're going?

First N. Dakotan—Oh—South Dakota!

Full of Knowledge.

(From the Washington Star.)

"Well," said a well young woman of the west end to a friend after half an hour's experience with a pompous flogging of twenty, well, for a man who doesn't know anything that younger knows more than any man I ever met."

The Onion's Virtues.

(From the Chicago Tribune.)

"Grindstone, have you ever tried a raw onion as a remedy for sleeplessness?"

"Tried it once, Kilfordan."

"How did it work?"

"Had to go to sleep to get rid of the taste."

Forcing a Tip.

(From Judge.)

Mr. Paulson (the porter)—Counsel, Joe had yo' arm still a minute. Der's a little dust down peak d' hand I'd laik t' slicker off. In a right, sah; hopee I see yo' on d' car again, sah!